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BY

RICHARD ALDINGTON

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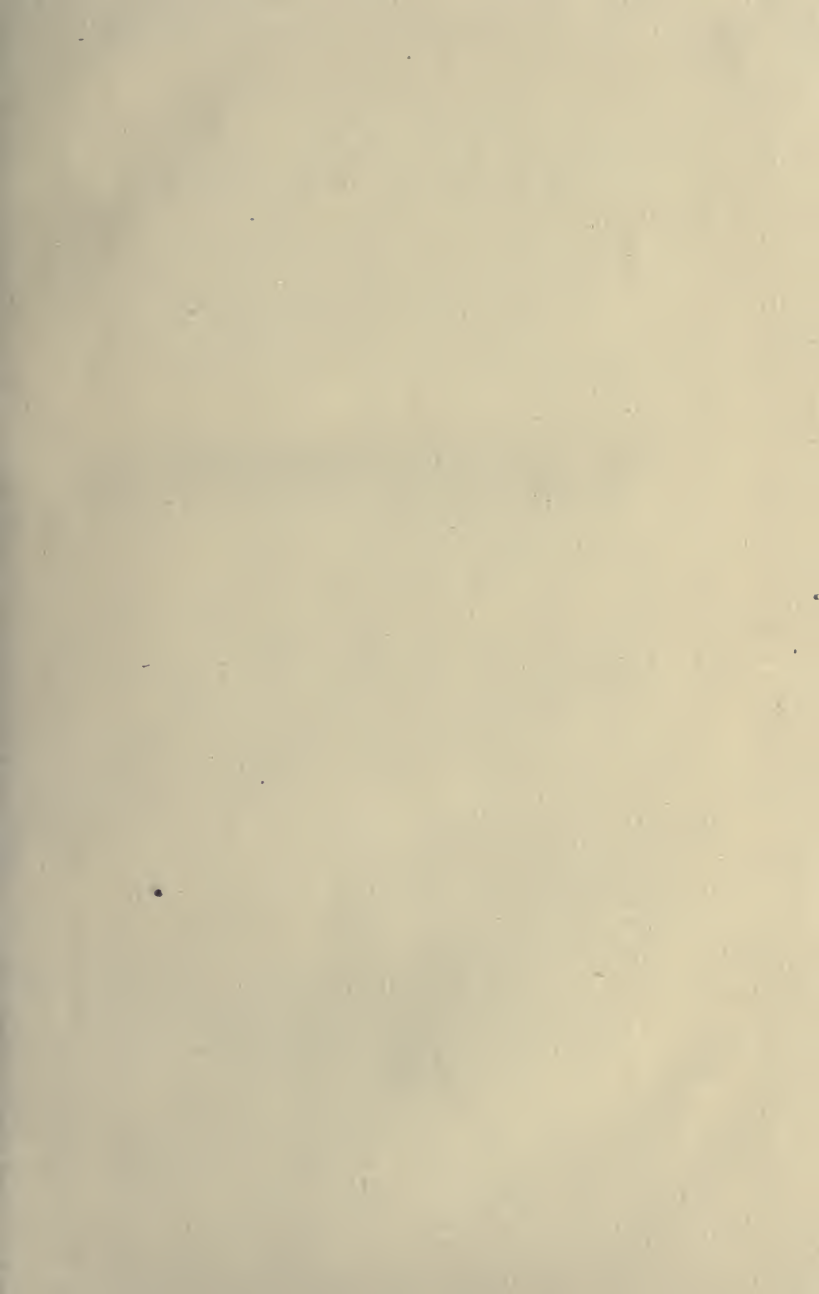
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IMAGES

BY THE SAME WRITER

Images of War (C. W. Beaumont), 1919. 12 - net.

Images of Desire (Elkin Mathews), 1919. 2/6 net.

Contributor to

Imagist Anthologies for 1914 (Poetry Bookshop),
1915, 1916 and 1917 (Constable & Co.).

Translations:

Anyte of Tegea (Egoist Ltd.), 1915. Second
Edition, 1919. 2/-.

Latin Poems of the Renaissance (Egoist Ltd),
1915. Second Edition, 1919. 2/-.

Greek Poems in the Manner of Anacreon
(Egoist Ltd.), 1919. 2/6.

IMAGES

BY

RICHARD ALDINGTON

LONDON: THE EGOIST LTD.
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NOTE

THESE Poems are taken from "Images" (Published 1915 and now out of print), and the various Imagist anthologies which are also being allowed to lapse. I have rescued one or two poems from periodicals. There are also one or two newer poems which did not quite fit into my other two books.

XMAC

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I M A G E S

CHORICOS

THE ancient songs
Pass deathward mournfully.

Cold lips that sing no more, and withered wreaths,
Regretful eyes, and drooping breasts and wings—
Symbols of ancient songs,
Mournfully passing
Down to the great white surges,
Watched of none
Save the frail sea-birds
And the lithe pale girls,
Daughters of Oceanus.

And the songs pass from the green land
Which lies upon the waves as a leaf
On the flowers of hyacinths,
And they pass from the waters,
The manifold winds and the dim moon,
And they come
Silently winging through soft Kimmerian dusk,
To the quiet level lands
That she keeps for us all,
That she wrought for us all for sleep
In the silver days of the earth's dawning—
Proserpina, daughter of Zeus.

And we turn from the Cyprian's breasts,
And we turn from thee,
Phœbus Apollon,
And we turn from the music of old,
And the hills that we loved and the meads,
And we turn from the fiery day,
And the lips that were over-sweet;
For silently
Brushing the fields with red-shod feet,
With purple robe
Searing the grass as with a sudden flame,
Death,
Thou hast come upon us.

And of all the ancient songs
Passing to the swallow-blue halls
By the dark streams of Persephone,
This only remains—
That in the end we turn to thee,
Death,
We turn to thee, singing
One last song.

O Death,
Thou art an healing wind
That blowest over white flowers
A-tremble with dew;
Thou art a wind flowing
Over far leagues of lonely sea;
Thou art the dusk and the fragrance;
Thou art the lips of love mournfully smiling;

Thou art the sad peace of one
Satiated with old desires;
Thou art the silence of beauty,
And we look no more for the morning,
We yearn no more for the sun
Since with thy white hands,
Death,
Thou crownest us with the pallid chaplets,
The slim colourless poppies
Which in thy garden alone
Softly thou gatherest.

And silently;
And with slow feet approaching—
And with bowed head and unlit eyes,
We kneel before thee:
And thou, leaning towards us,
Caressingly layest upon us
Flowers from thy thin cold hands,
And, smiling as a chaste woman
Knowing love in her heart,
Thou seekest our eyes
And the illimitable quietude
Comes gently upon us.

TO A GREEK MARBLE

πότνια, πότνια,
White grave goddess,
Pity my sadness,
O silence of Paros.

I am not of these about thy feet,
These garments and decorum;
I am thy brother,
Thy lover of aforetime crying to thee,
And thou hearest me not.

I have whispered thee in thy solitudes
Of our loves in Phrygia,
The far ecstasy of burning noons
When the fragile pipes
Ceased in the cypress shade,
And the brown fingers of the shepherd
Moved over slim shoulders;
And only the cicada sang.

I have told thee of the hills
And the lisp of reeds
And the sun upon thy breasts.

And thou hearest me not,
πότνια, πότνια,
Thou hearest me not.

ARGYRIA

O YOU,
O you most fair,
Swayer of reeds, whisperer
Among the flowering rushes,
You have hidden away your hands
Beneath the poplar leaves;
You have given them to the white waters.

Swallow-fleet,
Sea-child cold from waves;
Slight reed that sang so blithely in the wind;
White cloud the white sun kissed into the air;
Pan mourns for you.

White limbs, white song,
Pan mourns for you.

AT MITYLENE

O ARTEMIS,
Will you not leave the dark fastness
And set your steel-white foot upon the foam,
And come across the rustling sand
Setting it adrift with the wind of your raiment.

For these women have laid out a purple cloth,
And they have builded you an altar
Of white shells for the honey.
They have taken the sea grass for garlands
And cleansed their lips with the sea.

O Artemis,
Girdle the gold about you,
Set the silver upon your hair
And remember us—
We, who have grown weary even of music,
We, who would scream behind the wild dogs of
Scythia.

STELE

PAN, O Pan,
The oread weeps in the stony olive-garden
On the hill side.

There bloom the fragile
Blue-purple wind-flowers,
There the wild fragrant narcissus
Bends by the grey stones.
But Pan, O Pan,
The oread weeps in the stony olive-garden;
She heeds not the moss-coloured lizards
And crocus-yellow butterflies.

For her reed-pipe
That was the crying of the wind,
Her pipe that was the singing
Wind of the mountain,
Her pipe is broken.

Pan, O Pan,
As you rush from the peaks
With the wood-girls and flower-girls
And the shouting fauns,
Unawares you have broken her little reed
With your stamping hoofs.

And she weeps in the olive-garden.

LESBIA

GROW weary if you will, let me be sad.
Use no more speech now;
Let the silence spread gold hair above us,
Fold on delicate fold.
Use no more speech;
You had the ivory of my life to carve...

And Picus of Mirandola is dead;
And all the gods they dreamed and fabled of,
Hermes and Thoth and Christ are rotten now,
Rotten and dank...

And through it all I see your pale Greek face;
Tenderness
Makes me as eager as a little child to love you,
You morsel left half-cold on Cæsar's plate.

LEMURES

IN Nineveh,
And beyond Nineveh
In the dusk
They were afraid.

In Thebes of Egypt
In the dusk
They chanted of them to the dead.

In my Lesbos and Achaia
Where the God dwelt
We knew them.

Now men say "They are not";
But in the dusk
Ere the white sun comes—
A gay child that bears a white candle—
I am afraid of their rustling,
Of their terrible silence,
The menace of their secrecy.

HERMES, LEADER OF THE DEAD

WE, who loved thy lyre,
Yet knew the end of all songs
A lamentation and a mourning;
We, who loved Eos—
That maiden whiter than Narcissus—
And loved the midday heat, the sea-winds
Rustling across the vineyards;
Now in the twilight
Hold forth trembling hands
To thee, Hermes,
Leader of the Dead.

Bear us upon thy winged flight
Down the dark blue ways unto Orcus;
Make us stabile
With thy imperishable hands,
For our feet stumble, and age
Loosens our knees;
Our wearied eyes
Yearn for the heavy bowed gold blossoms
Beneath the very grey sky
Of Persephone.

THE RIVER

I.

I HAVE drifted along the river
Until I moored my boat
By these crossed trunks.
Here the mist moves
Over fragile leaves and rushes,
Colourless waters and brown fading hills.

You have come from beneath the trees
And move within the mist,
A floating leaf.

II.

O blue flower of the evening,
You have touched my face
With your leaves of silver.

Love me, for I must depart.

EPIGRAMS

NEW LOVE

SHE has new leaves
After her dead flowers,
Like the little almond tree
Which the frost hurt.

OCTOBER

The beech-trees are silver
For lack of the tree's blood;
At your kiss my lips
Became like the silver beech-leaves.

A GIRL

You were that clear Sicilian fluting
That pains our thought even now.

You were the notes
Of cold fantastic grief
Some few found beautiful.

BEAUTY THOU HAST HURT ME
OVERMUCH

THE light is a wound to me.
The soft notes
Feed upon the wound.

Where wert thou born
O thou woe
That consumest my life?
Whither comest thou?

Toothed wind of the seas,
No man knows thy beginning.
As a bird with strong claws
Thou woundest me,
O beautiful sorrow.

IN THE OLD GARDEN

I HAVE sat here happy in the gardens,
Watching the still pool and the reeds
And the dark clouds
Which the wind of the upper air
Tore like the green leafy boughs
Of the divers-hued trees of late summer;
But though I greatly delight
In these and the water-lilies,
That which sets me nighest to weeping
Is the rose and white colour of the smooth flag-
stones,
And the pale yellow grasses
Among them.

JUNE RAIN

HOT, a griffin's mouth of flame,
The sun rasped with his golden tongue
The city streets, till men and walls shrivelled;
The dusty air stagnated.

At the third noon a wind rippled,
A wide sea silently breaking;
A thin veil of rain-drops
Hid the sun and the hard blue.

A grey garment of rain,
Cold as hoar frost in April
Enwrapped us.

IN THE VIA SISTINA

O DAUGHTER of Isis,
Thou standest beside the wet highway
Of this decayed Rome,
A manifest harlot.
Straight and slim art thou
As a marble phallus;
Thy face is the face of Isis
—Carven
As she is carven in basalt.
And my heart stops with awe
At the presence of gods,
For there beside thee on the stall of images
Is the head of Osiris
Thy lord.

AMALFI

WE will come down to you,
O very deep sea,
And drift upon your pale green waves
Like scattered petals.

We will come down to you from the hills,
From the scented lemon-groves,
From the hot sun.
We will come down,
O Thalassa,
And drift upon
Your pale green waves
Like petals.

BROMIOS

(A frieze in the Vatican)

THE withered bonds are broken.
The waxed reeds and the double pipe
Clamour about me;
The hot wind swirls
Through the red pine trunks.

Io! The fauns and the satyrs.
The touch of their shagged curled fur
And blunt horns.

They have wine in heavy craters
Painted black and red;
Wine to splash on her white body.
Io!
She shrinks from the cold shower—
Afraid, afraid!

Let the Mænads break through the myrtles
And the boughs of the rhododaphnai.
Let them tear the quick deer's flesh.
Ah, the cruel exquisite fingers.
Io!
I have brought you the brown clusters,
The ivy-boughs and pine-cones.

Your breasts are cold sea-ripples,
But they smell of the warm grasses.

Throw wide the chiton and the peplum,
Maidens of the dew,
Beautiful are your bodies, O Mænads,
Beautiful the sudden folds,
The vanishing curves of the white linen
About you.

Io!
Hear the rich laughter of the forest,
The cymbals,
The trampling of the panisks and the centaurs.

IMAGES

I.

LIKE a gondola of green scented fruits
Drifting along the dark canals of Venice,
You, O exquisite one,
Have entered into my desolate city.

II.

The blue smoke leaps
Like swirling clouds of birds vanishing,
So my love leaps forth towards you,
Vanishes and is renewed.

III.

A rose-yellow moon in a pale sky
When the sunset is faint vermilion
In the mist among the tree-boughs
Art thou to me, my beloved.

IV.

A young beech tree on the edge of the forest
Stands still in the evening,
Yet shudders through all its leaves in the light air
And seems to fear the stars—
So are you still and so tremble.

V.

The red deer are high on the mountain,
They are beyond the last pine-trees,
And my desires have run with them.

VI.

The flower which the wind has shaken
Is soon filled again with rain;
So does my heart fill slowly with tears
Until you return.

THE FAUN SEES SNOW FOR THE FIRST
TIME

ZEUS,
Brazen-thunder-hurler,
Cloud-whirler, son-of-Kronos,
Send vengeance on these Oreads
Who strew
White frozen flecks of mist and cloud
Over the brown trees and the tufted grass
Of the meadows, where the stream
Runs black through shining banks
Of bluish white.

Zeus,
Are the halls of heaven broken up
That you flake down upon me
Feather-strips of marble?

Dis and Styx!
When I stamp my hoof
The frozen-cloud-specks jam into the cleft
So that I reel upon two slippery points. . .

Fool, to stand here cursing
When I might be running!

REFLECTIONS

I.

STEAL out with me
Over the moss and the daffodils.

Come to the temple,
Hung with sprays from untrimmed hedges.

I bring you a token
From the golden-haired revellers,
From the mad procession.

Come,
Flute girls shall pipe to us—
Their beautiful fingers!—
They are yellow-throated birds,
They send perfumes from dawn-scented garments,
Bending above us.

Come,
Bind your hair with white poplar,
Let your lips be sweet
Wild roses of Pæstum.

II.

Ghost moths hover over asphodel;
Shades, once Lais' peers
Drift past us;
The mist is grey.

Far over us
The white wave-crests flash in the sun;
The sea-girls lie upon hot weedy rocks.

Now the Maid returns to us
With fragrance of the world
And of the hours of gods.
On earth
Apple-trees, weighted with red fruit,
Streams, passing through the corn lands,
Hear laughter.

We pluck the asphodel,
Yet we weave no crowns
For we have no vines;
No one speaks here;
No one kisses.

SUMMER

A BUTTERFLY,
Black and scarlet,
Spotted with white,
Fans its wings
Over a privet flower.

A thousand crimson foxgloves,
Tall bloody pikes,
Stand motionless in the gravel quarry;
The wind runs over them.

A rose film over a pale sky
Fantastically cut by dark chimneys;
Candles winking in the windows.
Across an old city garden.

SCENTS

(WHITE JONQUILS)

OLD cloisters where a hollow fountain drips
And the brown church walls
Are soft with winter sun.

And the moist garden mould in March
After the wind.

(YELLOW JONQUILS)

The moon
Low down the hills Sorrento sees about her—
The orange orchards sweet in May.
Again the soft wet earth
In English gardens
When the rain and wind have passed.

THE POPLAR

WHY do you always stand there shivering
Between the white stream and the road?

The people pass through the dust
On bicycles, in carts, in motor-cars;
The waggoners go by at dawn;
The lovers walk on the grass path at night.

Stir from your roots, walk, poplar!
You are more beautiful than they are.

I know that the white wind loves you,
Is always kissing you and turning up
The white lining of your green petticoat.
The sky darts through you like blue rain,
And the grey rain drips on your flanks
And loves you.
And I have seen the moon
Slip his silver penny into your pocket
As you straightened your hair;
And the white mist curling and hesitating
Like a bashful lover about your knees.

I know you, poplar;
I have watched you since I was ten.
But if you had a little real love,
A little strength,
You would leave your nonchalant idle lovers
And go walking down the white road
Behind the waggoners.

There are beautiful beeches down beyond the
hill.
Will you always stand there shivering?

AFTER TWO YEARS

SHE is all so slight
And tender and white
As a May morning.
She walks without hood
At even. It is good
To hear her sing.

It is God's will
That I shall love her still
As he loves Mary.
And night and day
I will go forth to pray
That she love me.

She is as gold
Lovely, and far more cold.
Do thou pray with me,
For if I win grace
To kiss twice her face
God has done well to me.

AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

TURN the page and read:
"I dream of silent verses where the rhyme
Glides noiseless as an oar."

The heavy musty air, the black desks,
The bent heads and the rustling noises
In the great dome
Vanish. . .

And
The sun hangs in the cobalt-blue sky,
The boat drifts over the lake shallows,
The fishes skim like umber shades through the
undulating weeds,
The oleanders drop their rosy petals on the lawns,
And the swallows dive and swirl and whistle
About the cleft battlements of Can Grande's
castle. . . .

AT NIGHTS

AT nights I sit here,
Shading my eyes, shutting them if you glance
up,
Pretending to doze,
And watching you,
Thinking. . .

I think of when I first saw the beauty of things—
God knows I was poor enough and sad enough
And humiliated enough—

But not all the slights and the poorness and the
worry

Could hide away the green of the poplar leaves,
The ripples and light of the little stream,
The pattern of the ducks' feathers—

Like a Japanese print—

The dawns I saw in the winter

When I went shooting,

The summer walks and the winter walks,

The hot days with the cows coming down to the
water,

The flowers,

Buttercups, meadowsweet, hog's parsley,

And the larks singing in the morning

And the thrushes singing at evening

When I went out in the fields, muttering poetry. . .

I looked at the world as God did

When first He made it.

I saw that it was good.

And now at nights,
Now that everything has gone right somehow,
And I have friends and books
And no more bitterness,
I sit here, shading my eyes,
Peeping at you, watching you,
Thinking.

CHURCH WALK, KENSINGTON

(SUNDAY MORNING)

THE cripples are going to church.
Their crutches beat upon the stones,
And they have clumsy iron boots.

Their clothes are black, their faces peaked and
mean;
Their legs are withered
Like dried bean pods.

Their eyes are as stupid as frogs'.

And the god, September,
Has paused for a moment here
Garlanded with crimson leaves.
He held a branch of fruited oak.
He smiled like Hermes the beautiful
Cut in marble.

ST. MARY'S, KENSINGTON

THE orange plane-leaves
Rest gently on the cracked grey slabs
In the city churchyard.

O pitiful dead,
There is not one of those who pass by
To remember you.

But the trees do not forget;
Their severed tresses
Are laid sadly above you.

EVENING

THE chimneys, rank on rank,
Cut the clear sky;
The moon
With a rag of gauze about her loins
Poses among them, an awkward Venus—

And here am I looking wantonly at her
Over the kitchen sink.

IN THE TUBE

THE electric car jerks;
I stumble on the slats of the floor,
Fall into a leather seat
And look up.

A row of advertisements,
A row of windows,
Set in brown woodwork pitted with brass nails,
A row of hard faces,
Immobile,
In the swaying train,
Rush across the flickering background of fluted
dingy tunnel;
A row of eyes,
Eyes of greed, of pitiful blankness, of plethoric
complacency,
Immobile,
Gaze, stare at one point,
At my eyes.

Antagonism,
Disgust,
Immediate antipathy,
Cut my brain, as a dry sharp reed
Cuts a finger.

I surprise the same thought
In the brasslike eyes:

"What right have you to live."

CINEMA EXIT

AFTER the click and whirr
Of the glimmering pictures,
The dry feeling in the eyes
As the sight follows the electric flickerings,
The banal sentimentality of the films,
The hushed concentration of the people,
The tinkling piano—
Suddenly,
A vast avalanche of greenish yellow light
Pours over the threshold;
White globes darting vertical rays spot the sombre
buildings;
The violent gloom of the night
Battles with the radiance;
Swift figures, legs, skirts, white cheeks, hats
Flicker in oblique rays of dark and light.

Millions of human vermin
Swarm sweating
Along the night-arched cavernous roads.

(Happily rapid chemical processes
Will disintegrate them all.)

INTERLUDE

LOW your tin squeals
On your reedy whistle.

How they come
dancing,

White girls,
lithe girls,

In linked dance

From Attica.

Gay girls dancing

in the frozen street,

Hair streaming, and white raiment

Flying,

Red lips that first were

Red in Ephesus.

Gone!

You? Red-nose, piping by the Red Lion,

You!

Did you bring them?

Here, take my pennies,

"Mon semblable, mon frère!"

HAMPSTEAD HEATH

(EASTER MONDAY, 1915)

DARK clouds, torn into gaps of livid sky,
Pierced through
By a swift searchlight, a long white dagger.

The black murmuring crowd
Flows, eddies, stops, flows on
Between the lights
And the banks of noisy booths.

LONDON

(MAY, 1915)

GLITTERING leaves
Dance in a squall;
Behind them bleak immoveable clouds.

A church spire
Holds up a little brass cock
To peck at the blue wheatfields.

Roofs, conical spires, tapering chimneys,
Livid with sunlight, lace the horizon.

A pear-tree, a broken white pyramid
In a dingy garden, troubles me
With ecstasy.

At night, the moon, a pregnant woman,
Walks cautiously over the slippery heavens.

And I am tormented,
Obsessed,
Among all this beauty,
With a vision of ruins,
Of walls crumbling into clay.

EROS AND PSYCHE

IN an old dull yard near Camden Town,
Which echoes with the rattle of cars and 'buses
And freight-trains, puffing steam and smoke and
dirt
To the steaming sooty sky—
There stands an old and grimy statue,
A statue of Psyche and her lover, Eros.

A little nearer Camden Town,
In a square of ugly sordid shops,
Is another statue, facing the Tube,
Staring with a heavy purposeless glare
At the red and white shining tiles—
A tall stone statue of Cobden.
And though no one ever pauses to see
What hero it is that faces the Tube,
I can understand very well indeed

That England must honour its national heroes,
Must honour the hero of Free Trade—
Or was it the Corn Laws?—
That I can understand.

But what I shall never understand
Is the little group in the dingy yard
Under the dingier sky,
The Eros and Psyche—
Surrounded with pots and terra-cotta busts
And urns and broken pillars—
Eros, naked, with his wings stretched out
Just lighting down to kiss her on the lips.

What are they doing here in Camden Town
In the midst of all this clamour and filth?
They, who should stand in a sun-lit room
Hung with deep purple, painted with gods,
Paved with white porphyry,
Stand for ever embraced
By the side of a rustling fountain
Over a marble basin
Carved with leopards and grapes and young men
dancing;
Or in a garden leaning above Corinth,
Under the ilices and the cypresses,
Very white against a very blue sky;
Or growing hoary, if they must grow old,
With lichens and softly creeping moss:
What are they doing here in Camden Town?
And who has brought their naked beauty

And their young fresh lust to Camden Town,
Which settled long ago to toil and sweat and filth,
Forgetting—to the greater glory of Free Trade—
Young beauty and young love and youthful flesh?

Slowly the rain settles down on them,
Slowly the soot eats into them,
Slowly the stone grows greyer and dirtier,
Till in spite of his spreading wings
Her eyes have a rim of soot
Half an inch deep,
And his wings, the tall god's wings,
That should be red and silver
Are ochrous brown.

And I peer from a 'bus-top
As we splash through the grease and puddles,
And I glimpse them, huddled against the wall,
Half-hidden under a freight-train's smoke,
And I see the limbs that a Greek slave cut
In some old Italian town,
I see them growing older
And sadder
And greyer.

CHILDHOOD

I.

THE bitterness, the misery, the wretchedness
of childhood
Put me out of love with God,
I can't believe in God's goodness;
I can believe
In many avenging gods.
Most of all I believe
In gods of bitter dullness,
Cruel local gods
Who seared my childhood.

II.

I've seen people put
A chrysalis in a match-box,
"To see," they told me, "what sort of moth would
come."
But when it broke its shell
It slipped and stumbled and fell about its prison
And tried to climb to the light
For space to dry its wings.

That's how I was.
Somebody found my chrysalis
And shut it in a match-box.
My shrivelled wings were beaten,
Shed their colours in dusty scales
Before the box was opened
For the moth to fly.

And then it was too late,
Because the beauty a child has,
And the beautiful things it learns before its birth,
Were shed, like moth scales, from me.

III.

I hate that town;
I hate the town I lived in when I was little;
I hate to think of it.
There were always clouds, smoke, rain
In that dingy little valley.
It rained; it always rained.
I think I never saw the sun until I was nine—
And then it was too late;
Everything's too late after the first seven years.

That long street we lived in
Was duller than a drain
And nearly as dingy.
There were the big College
And the pseudo-Gothic town-hall.
There were the sordid provincial shops—
The grocer's, and the shops for women,
The shop where I bought transfers,
And the piano and gramophone shop
Where I used to stand
Staring at the huge shiny pianos and at the
pictures
Of a white dog staring into a gramophone.
How dull and greasy and grey and sordid it was.

On wet days—it was always wet—
I used to kneel on a chair
And look at it from the window.

The dirty yellow trams
Dragged noisily along
With a clatter of wheels and bells
And a humming of wires overhead.
They threw up the filthy rain-water from the
hollow lines
And then the water ran back
Full of brownish foam bubbles.

There was nothing else to see—
It was all so dull—
Except a few grey legs under shiny black
umbrellas
Running along the grey shiny pavements;
Sometimes there was a waggon
Whose horses made a strange loud hollow sound
With their hoofs
Through the silent rain.

And there was a grey museum
Full of dead birds and dead insects and dead
animals
And a few relics of the Romans—dead also.
There was the sea-front,
A long asphalt walk with a bleak road beside it,
Three piers, a row of houses,
And a salt dirty smell from the little harbour.

I was like a moth—
Like one of those grey Emperor moths
Which flutter through the vines at Capri.
And that damned little town was my match-box,
Against whose sides I beat and beat
Until my wings were torn and faded, and dingy
As that damned little town.

IV.

At school it was just as dull as that dull High
Street.

They taught me pothooks—
I wanted to be alone, although I was so little,
Alone, away from the rain, the dinginess, the
dulness,
Away somewhere else—

The town was dull;
The front was dull;
The High Street and the other street were dull—
And there was a public park, I remember,
And that was damned dull, too,
With its beds of geraniums no one was allowed to
pick,
And its clipped lawns you weren't allowed to
walk on,
And the gold-fish pond you mustn't paddle in,
And the gate made out of a whale's jaw-bones,
And the swings, which were for "Board-School
children,"
And its gravel paths.

And on Sundays they rang the bells
From Baptist and Evangelical and Catholic
churches,
They had the Salvation Army.
I was taken to a High Church;
The parson's name was Mowbray,
"Which is a good name, but he thinks too much of
it"—
That's what I heard people say.

I took a little black book
To that cold, grey, damp-smelling church,
And I had to sit on a hard bench,
Wriggle off it to stand up when they sang psalms
And wriggle off it to kneel down when they
prayed—
And then there was nothing to do
Except to play trains with the hymn-books.

There was nothing to see,
Nothing to do,
Nothing to play with,
Except that in a large empty room upstairs
There was a large tin box
Containing reproductions of the Magna Charta,
Of the Declaration of Independence,
And of a letter from Raleigh after the Armada.
There were also several packets of stamps,
Yellow and blue Guatemala parrots,
Blue stags and red baboons and birds from
Sarawak,

Indians and Men-of-War
From the United States,
And the green and red portraits
Of King Francobollo
Of Italy.

V.

I don't believe in God.
I do believe in avenging gods
Who plague us for sins we never sinned
But who avenge us.

That's why I'll never have a child,
Never shut up a chrysalis in a match-box
For the moth to spoil and crush its bright
colours
Beating its wings against the dingy prison-wall.

DAISY

"Plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes, Nunc" . . .
—CATULLUS.

YOU were my playmate by the sea—
We swam together—
Your girl's body had no breasts.

We found prawns among the rocks;
We liked to feel the sun and to do nothing;
In the evening we played games with the others.

It made me glad to be by you.

Sometimes I kissed you,
And you were always glad to kiss me;
But I was afraid—I was only fourteen.

And I had quite forgotten you,
You and your name.

To-day I pass through the streets,
She who touches my arm and talks with me
Is—who knows?—Helen of Sparta,
Dryope, Laodamia. . .

And there are you
A whore in Oxford Street.

ROUND-POND

WATER ruffled and speckled by galloping
wind

Which puffs and spurts it into tiny pashing
breakers

Dashed with lemon-yellow afternoon sunlight.

The shining of the sun upon the water
Is like a scattering of gold crocus petals
In a long wavering irregular flight.

The water is cold to the eye
As the wind to the cheek.

In the budding chestnuts
Whose sticky buds glimmer and are half burst
open

The starlings make their clitter-clatter;
And the blackbirds in the grass
Are getting as fat as the pigeons.

Even the cold wind is seeking a new mistress.

WHITECHAPEL

NOISE;
Iron hoofs, iron wheels, iron din
Of drays and trams and feet passing;
Iron
Beaten to a vast mad cacophony.

*In vain the shrill far cry
Of swallows sweeping by;
In vain the silence and green
Of meadows Apriline;
In vain the clear white rain—*

Soot; mud;
A nation maddened with labour;
Interminable collision of energies—
Iron beating upon iron;
Smoke whirling upwards,
Speechless, impotent.

*In vain the shrill far cry
Of kittiwakes that fly
Where the sea waves leap green.
The meadows Apriline—*

Noise, iron, smoke;
Iron, iron, iron.

IMAGES

I.

THROUGH the dark pine trunks
Silver and yellow gleam the clouds
And the sun;
The sea is faint purple.
My love, my love, I shall never reach you.

II.

You are beautiful
As a straight red fox-glove
Among green plants;
I stretched out my hand to caress you:
It is blistered by the envious nettles.

III.

I have spent hours this morning
Seeking in the brook
For a clear pebble
To remind me of your eyes.

And all the sleepless hours of night
I think of you.

IV.

Your kisses are poignant,
Ah! why must I leave you?

Here alone I scribble and re-scribble
The words of a long-dead Greek poet:
"Love, thou art terrible,
Ah, Love, thou art bitter-sweet!"

INARTICULATE GRIEF

LET the sea beat its thin torn hands
In anguish against the shore,
Let it moan
Between headland and cliff;
Let the sea shriek out its agony
Across waste sands and marshes,
And clutch great ships,
Tearing them plate from steel plate
In reckless anger;
Let it break the white bulwarks
Of harbour and city;
Let it sob and scream and laugh
In a sharp fury,
With white salt tears
Wet on its writhen face;
Ah! let the sea still be mad
And crash in madness among the shaking rocks—
For the sea is the cry of our sorrow.

FANTASY

THE limbs of gods,
Still, veined marble,
Rest heavily in sleep
Under a saffron twilight.

Not for them battle,
Severed limbs, death, and a cry of victory;
Not for them strife
And a torment of storm.

A vast breast moves slowly,
The great thighs shift,
The stone eyelids rise;
The slow tongue speaks:

*"Only a rain of bright dust
In the outer air;
A little whisper of wind;
Sleep; rest; forget."*

Bright dust of battle!
A little whisper of dead souls!

R.V. AND ANOTHER

VAGABONDS of beauty,
Wistful exquisite waifs
From a lost, and a forgotten, and a lovely land,
We cannot comfort you
Though our souls yearn for you.

You are delicate strangers
In a gloomy town,
Stared at and hated—
Gold crocus blossoms in a drab lane.

We cannot comfort you;
Your life is anguish;
All we can do—
Mutely bring pungent herbs and branches of oak
And resinous scented pine wreaths
To hide the crown of thorny pain
Crushing your white frail foreheads.

PRAYER

I AM a garden of red tulips
And late daffodils and bay-hedges,
A small sunk garden
About an oblong pool
With three grey lead Dutch tanks—
I am this garden shattered and blown
With a day-long western gale
And bursts of rapid rain.

There are dank petals in the ruffled waters,
And muddy flowers upon the path.
The grass is covered with torn leaves.

God of gardens, dear small god of gardens,
Grant me faint glow of sunlight,
A last bird hopping in the quiet haze,
Then let the night swoop swiftly,
Fold round and crush out life
For ever.

CAPTIVE

THEY have torn the gold tethinx
From my hair;
And wrenched the bronze sandals
From my ankles.

They have taken from me my friend
Who knew the holy wisdom of poets,
Who had drunk at the feast
Where Simonides sang.

No more do I walk the calm gardens
In the white mist of olives;
No more do I take the rose-crown
From the white hands of a maiden.

I, who was free, am a slave;
The Muses have forgotten me,
The gods do not hear me.

Here there are no flowers to love;
But afar off I dream that I see
Bent poppies and the deathless asphodel.

SUNSETS

THE white body of the evening
Is torn into scarlet,
Slashed and gouged and seared
Into crimson,
And hung ironically
With garlands of mist.

And the wind
Blowing over London from Flanders
Has a bitter taste.

THE FAUN CAPTIVE

A GOD'S strength lies
More in the fervour of his worshippers
Than in his own divinity.
Who now regards me or who twines
Red wool and threaded lilies round the brows
Of my neglected statues?
Who now seeks my aid
To add skill to the hunter's hand
Or save some pregnant ewe or bitch
Helpless in travail?
None, since that fierce autumn noon
I lay asleep under Zeus-holy oaks
Heavy with sirupy wine and tired
With the close embraces
Of some sweet wearer of the leopard-skin—
That noon they snared and bound me as I slept
And dragged me for their uncouth mirth
Out of my immemorial woods and crags
Down to their bastard hamlets.

Then the god's blood my father spilled
To get me upon a mortal stock, dwindled and
shrank,
And I was impotent and weak
As the once desirable flesh of my human mother;
I that should have been dreaded in wan recesses,
Worshipped in high woods, a striker of terror
To the wayfarer in lonely places,
I, a lord of golden flesh and dim music,
I a captive and coarsely derided!

Ai! I could bite the brown flesh
Of my arms and hands for shame and grief.

I am weary for the freedom of free things.
The old gay life of the half-god,
Who had no dread of death or sorrow.
I am weary for the open spaces,
The long damp sands acrid with many tides,
And the infinite wistfulness of evening seas.
I am weary for wooded silences,
The nymph-rapt hours of heat,
The slow cool lapse of moonlit nights,
The solitude of the mysterious stars
Pearlwise scattered upon the domed breast of the
Great Mother,
Oh, weary for my brown clean streams,
And wet petals of woodland flowers,
Scented with dew and delicate as a kiss.

Here they grow careless, thinking me a coward,
But one night I shall break these thongs
And kill, kill, kill in sharp revenge.
Then out of doors by the lush pastures
To the heath and the foot-hills and the hills,
To the wild-rose kisses of the deathless girls
Who laugh and flash among the trees,
Out to the unploughed lands no foot oppresses,
The lands that are free, being free of man.

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